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## European Mobility of UK educated graduates. Who stays, who goes?

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### Abstract

Official figures from the Home Office show an increase in mobility of the highly-skilled from the United Kingdom (UK) to other European countries. This paper analyses the social composition of intra-European mobile graduates from the UK in the context of recent political developments (Bologna-Process, European Higher Education Area). Using quantitative and qualitative data from a longitudinal study of students and its follow-up study, the paper compares the social composition and current activity of intra-European mobile graduates with those remaining in the UK. Personal and higher education-related variables together with the current type of employment were significant for the distinction between intra-European mobile graduates and 'UK stayers'. UK-educated mobile graduates were identified as 'Eurostars', who come from high social classes or studied at high tariff higher education institutions. Mobility was identified as one way for UK-educated graduates to avoid employment in non-graduate jobs and add further value to their undergraduate degrees.

Key words: Graduates' European Mobility; Bologna Process; Outward Mobility; Migration; European Higher Education Area.

### Introduction

A vast body of research exists on student mobility (for example, King *et al.*, 2010), however, relatively little covers United Kingdom (UK)-educated graduates moving to a different European country. This paper addresses this gap in knowledge and aims to compare the social compositions of mobile graduates with those of graduates remaining in the UK, together with a description of differences and similarities within the group of mobile graduates.

Traditionally, the prevalent discourse of migration within Europe has been that of the lower-skilled workers moving towards more affluent countries (Recchi and Favell, 2009). Political developments such as the European single market; the creation of the European Higher Education Area; the availability of cheap air travel; and new forms of information and communication technology have created an opportunity for the highly skilled to realise occupational ambitions and get to know a foreign country without longer-term commitments. The new form of mobility within European countries is characterised by highly skilled graduates moving between their home countries and other countries who see their mobility experience as an asset, as an 'employability advantage' (Crossman and Clarke, 2010, p. 621) or as 'mobility capital' (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002) in the competition for jobs, especially international jobs (Wiers-Jenssen, 2008).

Publicly, mobility of the higher skilled is mainly discussed in two ways: on one hand, graduate mobility is encouraged as it is seen as one path to create a joined European identity. Mobility of the higher-skilled workforce is expected to result in an intra-European knowledge transfer (Teichler, 2004) and thus will strengthen the European economy. The new UK strategy for outward mobility sees the experience of mobility as one way to maintain and increase graduate employability both within the UK and outside (UK Higher Education International Unit, 2013). On the other hand, mobility is seen as one reaction of graduates to the low number of graduate jobs available in the UK ('brain-drain'). The discussion of mobile graduates going abroad to find employment in jobs appropriate to their qualifications is thus embedded in a critical evaluation of employers' recruitment and job design strategies and contextualises the debate regarding a possible mismatch between the skills developed by the educational system and those actually required in the economy (Independent, 2013).

This ambiguity of graduates' mobility in the public discourse, between politically desired in order to bring different European countries closer together with an expected increase in individual employability of graduates and the threat of losing the best-educated graduates to non-UK based employers posed by the 'brain drain' debate is the underlying motivation for this paper. This paper will provide further insights into the group of intra-European mobile graduates and thus allows for a new discussion of the potential contrast between the UK's national interests and the European policy.

Most previous studies have looked at graduates returning to their home countries and their integration into the labour market in order to see how transferable the skills acquired in a different country are for the home labour market and how flexibly this labour market reacts to returning graduates (Wiers-Jenssen and Try, 2005; Liagouras *et al.*, 2003; Cai, 2012). The presented research takes a different approach: the starting point of the paper is a cohort of graduates (including international and other European graduates) from UK higher education institutions, some of whom had moved to different European countries. The paper aims to identify determinants distinguishing 'stayers' and 'leavers' consisting of UK mobile graduates; returners; and other mobile graduates.

The overarching aim of this paper is to contrast the social composition of UK-educated mobile graduates with that of those staying in the UK after graduation; and to identify differences within the group of European graduate migrants. It will enable future researchers and policy makers, both in the UK and within other European countries, to understand differences and similarities within European mobile graduates (EMGs) and the determining factors of mobility of UK graduates within Europe. Who, of all UK graduates, is mobile within Europe?

A first theoretical part of this paper will look at previous research regarding the mobility especially of UK-educated graduates within Europe. After a short introduction to the data sets, differences and similarities within EMGs will be discussed using descriptive methods. A second part will use logistic regression models to analyse factors increasing the probability for mobility after graduation. Finally, a concluding chapter will discuss the findings in the context of previous research and the current policy debates.

## **Graduate Mobility within the European Higher Education Area**

### ***The European context***

Mobility of graduates within Europe is politically desired within the European Higher Education Area and its increase is the hallmark to ensure its high quality and diversity. In the Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education in 2009, the importance of mobility for personal development and employability within the newly founded European Higher Education Area was stressed. Other reasons cited include the respect for diversity and a capacity to deal with other cultures; linguistic pluralism; and an increase in cooperation and competition between higher education institutions (Communiqué of the Conference of European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2009). Mobility of graduates has to be seen in the wider concept of the ‘Europeanisation’ in education (Dale and Robertson, 2008) and the creation of stronger European Identity (Findlay *et al.*, 2006). The political aim of recent developments can be described as the creation of mobile, multilingual ‘global graduates’ (Brooks and Waters, 2013) who work as ‘agents of future European integration’ (King and Ruiz-Gelices, 2003).

Despite current populist anti-immigrant sentiment in the UK and elsewhere, there are indications that the forms of mobility (reflected in the use of this term rather than using the term ‘migration’ (Findlay *et al.*, 2006)) are changing, especially in an inner-European geographical perspective. The existing literature suggests that the mobility of the so-called highly-skilled ‘Eurostars’ (Recchi and Favell, 2009) can be theoretically framed in three ways (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Ackers and Gill, 2008; Cieslik, 2011).

A first perspective focusses on the human capital of movers and its implications on the national and regional labour market (Green *et al.*, 2009). In previous years, the proportion of European Union (EU) movers with a tertiary-level education has gradually increased and is now higher than that of national residents. ‘In other words, the educational level of EU movers has exceeded that of the general population. EU movers are now a positively selected population in terms of education’ (Recchi and Favell, 2009, p.16).

Second, mobility is expected to add further value to movers’ employability. Employability is an extremely complex concept (Harvey, 2001) and should include both soft skills and hard knowledge (Andrews and Higson, 2008). Many authors have stressed the increase in mobile students and graduates’ employability by improved language proficiency, cultural awareness and global competences (Behle and Atfield, 2013; Brooks and Waters, 2011; Teichler and Janson, 2007, also see the critical discussion of higher education for global citizenship by Clifford and Montgomery, 2014). In addition to the skills enhancement, mobility can directly improve career prospects ‘by adding to an individual’s social and cultural capital’ (Findlay *et al.*, 2006 p. 294). This, so-called, ‘mobility capital’ identifies the holder as ‘migratory elite’ and thus ready and willing to move, open to changes in their environment, language, personal entourage, lifestyle and working style (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002).

Third, mobility is no longer seen as a one-way ticket but rather as continuous and multiple processes (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). The frequency, duration and permanency of mobility, however, vary for individual graduates.

### ***Mobility of UK-educated graduates***

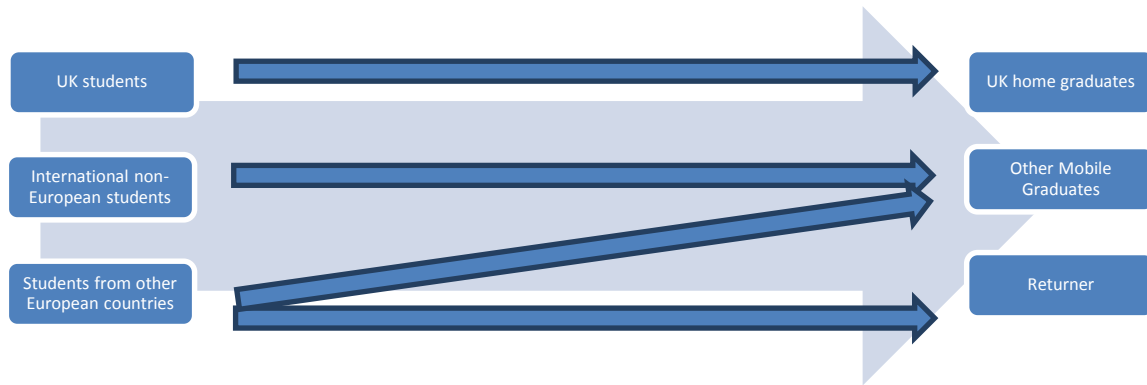
Traditionally, the UK has often been discussed as a destination for many highly skilled migrants (Ackers and Gill, 2008; Constant and D'Agosto, 2008). Some recent reports, however, have placed the mobility of British-educated people on the agenda. A Home Office report stated that over the past twenty years, the largest group of migrants has consistently been those whose previous occupation was 'professional or managerial'. Forty per cent of all those moving to a different country went to a different European country (Murray *et al.*, 2012).

Mobility, both of graduates and students, is politically desired in order to add new complimentary skills to those gained by undergraduates and thus increase individual employability. The political aim is to ensure that UK graduates are able to work across different cultures and within a diverse workforce, in the UK and internationally (UK Higher Education International Unit, 2013).

However, mobility can also be seen as one reaction to the graduate labour market. In an unpublished study by the Trendence Institute, 23 per cent of all students surveyed stated that they intended to leave the country after graduation to find a professional position abroad. A recent Office for National Statistics (ONS) publication (Fender 2013) estimated the value of the human capital that is currently unused in the economy at £754bn a year, which is the largest gap between used and unused human capital since records began in 2004. In a longitudinal analysis (Purcell *et al.*, 2013), it was shown that of all 2009–2010 graduates from higher education approximately 40 per cent were still employed in a non-graduate job more than one year after graduation. A decade ago, the proportion of graduates employed in non-graduate jobs fell steadily in the post-graduate period. This was no longer the case as the proportion of graduates in non-graduate employment appeared to be fairly constant. In this context, the observed mobility of graduates needs to be regarded as a worrying development as it could be one way that graduates deal with the difficulties in finding suitable skilled work. This 'brain drain' could indicate a threat to the British economy and could leave a skills vacuum that might cause significant problems for the UK economy in the future (RT News, 2012). The *Independent* (2013) warned that this recent development implies that all the efforts and investment put into education at university level in the past decades have not yielded the economic benefits predicted.

In this context, it is valuable to take a closer look at the group of EMGs, their similarities and differences and contrast this group with those remaining in the UK after their degree. EMGs are recruited from home and international students and, depending on their current location; three different groups can be identified (Figure 1).

Figure 1: The evolution of the three groups of European Mobile Graduates



‘UK mobile graduates’ were either born in the UK or had applied from the UK and lived in a different European country after graduation. ‘Returners’ were identified as graduates from UK higher education institutions who were not born in the UK or lived there during the application process and returned to either their country of birth or the country they had applied from. Finally, graduates from UK higher education institutions who moved after graduation to a country different from their country of birth or the country they had applied from were defined as ‘other mobile graduates’.

The following hypotheses, which will be tested using empirical data, were created on the basis of previous research. They anticipate that EMGs and those staying in the UK after their graduation will have different personal characteristics (class, previous mobility experiences), higher education-related characteristics (subjects, class of degree) and current activities (employment, further study).

It has been suggested that the mobile graduates might be part of a new European élite, the ‘Eurostars’ (Recchi and Favell 2009). Returning and other graduates were recruited from higher social classes as ‘the inequality in student mobility opportunities at an individual and higher education institution level conspire with social class to reproduce uneven chances of students becoming ‘Eurostars’ (Findlay *et al.*, 2006 p. 313). One way to identify the élite in the UK is parental occupation and the attendance of the ‘right’ higher education institution; and it is expected that the EMGs are characterised by their higher socio-economic class and attendance at so-called higher-tariff higher education institutions. Purcell *et al.* (2009a) ranked higher education institutions according to the tariff points required for access.

*Hypothesis 1a: EMGs are more likely to come from higher socio-economic classes.*

*Hypothesis 1b: EMGs are more likely to have graduated from higher-tariff higher education institutions.*

Mobility has been described as a reoccurring and continuous process in which graduates manage to add value to their previous education. For the current research the question is whether EMGs’ previous education had any mobility elements and whether, in addition to this, they had chosen to study subjects that facilitate mobility (for example languages).

*Hypothesis 2a: EMGs were more likely than ‘stayers’ to have had previous mobility experience.*

*Hypothesis 2b: EMGs were more likely than ‘stayers’ to have studied languages or have had a language element as part of their courses.*

Even after the harmonisation within the Bologna-process and the European Higher Education Area, educational systems and their outputs substantially differ across countries (Schneider, 2009) and even across higher education institutions within countries (Williams and Filippakou, 2010). Most countries operationalise educational attainment ‘using educational certificates obtained and thus endorse a signalling device’ understanding of educational attainment (Schneider, 2009). However, it is currently unclear whether the educational attainment obtained in the UK is immediately transferable to a different European context, especially since a recent study found that, based on their use of knowledge and skills from higher education, UK-educated graduates were less prepared for entry to employment, compared to graduates from continental Europe (Brennan and Little, 2010). However, in connection with hypothesis 1, assuming that European employers and higher education institutions understand educational attainments from the UK, it is more likely that those holding a higher class of degree or having studied at higher tariff higher education institutions would be mobile.

*Hypothesis 3: EMGs with a higher class of degree are more likely to be mobile.*

With regards to the transferability of education undertaken abroad, Wiers-Jenssen (2011) lists in her literature review many international studies in which the labour market outcome of migrants is poorer compared with those who had undertaken their education domestically. In her own study, the author found that unemployment and over-education were more prevalent amongst returning mobile degree students but on the positive side, if they were employed, graduates with education from abroad were more likely to have higher wages and hold more international jobs (Wiers-Jenssen, 2008; Wiers-Jenssen and Try, 2005; Wiers-Jenssen, 2011). A recent revision of the Standard Occupational Classifications allows for the differentiation between graduate and non-graduate jobs according to the level of skills and qualification (Purcell *et al.*, 2013, p. 20). It is expected that returning EMGs were more likely to hold graduate jobs as they might possess more knowledge and connections in the local labour market.

Graduates who moved to a different country rather than their home country (UK home graduates and other mobile graduates, Figure 1) are expected to work in skill-related employment rather than being underemployed, as they might have been recruited specifically because of their specialist knowledge. Alternatively, mobility after graduation could take the form of a gap year in which graduates take on lower-skilled occupations to save for further travel. Therefore, the analysis of this impact needs to be twofold: first, as a general assumption and second, in interaction with the nationality of EMGs.

*Hypothesis 4a: EMGs were generally more likely to hold graduate jobs.*

*Hypothesis 4b: UK home graduates and other movers were less likely to work in a graduate job.*

In previous analysis (Purcell *et al.*, 2013), it was seen that a higher proportion of European graduates entered further study after graduation in the UK or elsewhere. It can be expected that this will also be the case for returners and movers outside of the UK.

*Hypothesis 4c: Returners and other movers were more likely to engage in further study.*

## **Empirical Findings: Differences and Similarities within European mobile graduates; and in contrast with graduates staying in the UK**

### ***Database***

Altogether, some 17000 interviewees with graduates from undergraduate degrees were realised, 642 of whom were living in a different European country. Depending on the lengths of their courses, most respondents had graduated in 2009 (from three-year-courses) or in 2010 (from four-year-courses). The fieldwork was conducted in autumn/winter 2011–12. At the time of the interview, 26 per cent of all EMGs were enrolled on a postgraduate course and 56 per cent were employed or self-employed (weighted sample). Additionally, this paper refers to a qualitative SRHE-funded follow-up project in which twelve EMGs (five UK mobile graduates, four returners and three other mobile graduates) were interviewed in May–June 2013 with regards to the role their mobility experience played for their current activity (further study or employment); the barriers they experienced and their future plans. Of all mobile graduates, 39 per cent were identified as ‘UK mobile graduates’, 43 per cent as returners and the remainder as other mobile graduates. More information about the Futuretrack project can be found in Purcell *et al.*, (2009) and Purcell *et al.*, (2013).

The similarities and differences between different types of EMG were compared using descriptive methods together with Pearsons’ Chi square tests and variance analyses (ANOVA). A second part of the empirical analysis compares mobile graduates with those having remained in the UK after graduation using a hierarchical logistic regression model.

### ***Characteristics of European mobile graduates by ‘returners’, ‘UK migrants’ and ‘other migrants’***

Mobility from the UK to a different European country accounts for 6 per cent of all Futuretrack respondents whilst 5 per cent have moved to non-European countries.

There are no significant age differences between the three groups of EMGs. The proportion of female graduates is slightly higher with those holding UK nationality compared to other mobile graduates or returners. The sample is predominantly white with a higher proportion of minority ethnic groups in the other mobile graduates. Other EMGs also come from the highest social classes and their parents were most likely to hold degrees themselves.

The qualitative interviews show that English language skills were one reason why many international students choose to study in the UK. Many non-native speakers can also be found



in the group of mobile UK graduates as only 73 per cent of them were brought up with English as their first language. There were no significant differences between European returners and other mobile graduates.

A large proportion, especially of other EMGs (80 per cent) but also of UK mobile graduates (68 per cent) and returners (61 per cent), attended highest and high-tariff universities. Nearly all (88 per cent) of other EMGs held either a first-class or an upper-second class honours degree, which was also the case for 80 per cent of all UK mobile graduates and for roughly 70 per cent of returning EMGs.

### ***Who goes? The contrast between ‘stayers’ and ‘leavers’***

In order to shed light on the differences between EMGs and those remaining in the UK, a hierarchical logistic regression model was estimated in which the impact of personal, higher education-related variables together with variables describing the current situation have been taken into account. Current location was the dependant variable, which was coded with ‘1’ if graduates had moved to a different European country and ‘0’ if they had remained in the UK. The first model controls for personal characteristics (age, gender, citizenship and socio-economic status), the second adds higher education-related variables (subject, institution, class of degree) whilst the third model includes variables describing the current activities. Interactions as formulated in hypothesis 4 (above) are tested in the fourth model. Findings from the qualitative interviews are used to help understand the results of the regression models.

With relation to personal characteristics, graduates from the youngest and the oldest age group were less likely to be mobile. Compared with female graduates, male graduates were more likely to be mobile once higher education-related and activity-related variables were controlled for. It was not surprising that graduates holding the citizenship of other European countries were more likely than those holding a UK nationality or any other non-European nationality to have moved to a different European country.

As expected (hypothesis 1a and 1b), those from higher socio-economic background and/or those graduating from higher tariff institutions were more likely to be mobile. This influence remains significant over all the models.

A second set of hypotheses (2a and 2b) referred to EMGs’ study of languages and their previous mobility experience. The impact of the subjects was consistent over all the models; mobile graduates were more likely to have studied languages or interdisciplinary subjects many of which include a language element compared to non-mobile graduates. These findings can be illustrated using the example of a UK mobile graduate who now lives in Spain. She studied languages because she always knew she wanted to work abroad ‘I enjoy the challenge of employing my language skills every day’ (UK5). However, graduates of other subjects such as business and administration studies or law were also found to be more mobile compared to all other subjects.

Table 1: Logistic regression (moving to a different European country = 1, remaining in the UK = 0)

		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
		B	Sig.	B	Sig.	B	Sig.	B	Sig.
Age (in 2006)	18 and under	-0.24	0.019	-0.269	0.01	-0.291	0.006	-0.653	0
	19–20	Reference Group							
	21–25	-0.127	0.341	-0.004	0.977	-0.017	0.903	0.49	0
	26 and over	-1.021	0	-0.79	0	-0.803	0	-0.645	0.001
	Male	0.118	0.185	0.2	0.029	0.182	0.049	0.154	0.074
Citizenship	UK citizen	-3.042	0	-3.045	0	-2.961	0		
	Other European nationality	Reference Group							
	Other nationality	-1.146	0	-1.128	0	-1.129	0		
SES	Managerial and professional occupations	0.417	0	0.35	0.002	0.35	0.002	0.296	0.005
	Intermediate occupations	Reference Group							
	Routine and manual occupations	-0.056	0.72	0.008	0.962	0.032	0.842	-0.16	0.286
	Previous experiences abroad (as part of course)			0.529	0	0.555	0	0.657	0
Subject	Physical sciences			0.446	0.017	0.425	0.024	0.314	0.081
	Social studies			0.426	0.012	0.461	0.007	0.577	0
	Law			0.573	0.014	0.605	0.01	0.687	0.002
	Business & admin studies			0.439	0.009	0.543	0.001	0.998	0
	Languages			1.609	0	1.616	0	1.44	0
	Hist & philosophical studies			0.42	0.053	0.445	0.042	0.351	0.089
	Creative arts & design			0.437	0.023	0.524	0.007	0.476	0.009
	Interdisciplinary subjects			0.755	0	0.807	0	0.831	0
	Other subjects	Reference Group							
HEI	Highest or high tariff			0.404	0	0.334	0.004	0.401	0
	Medium or lower tariff	Reference Group							
	General or specialist			0.629	0.014	0.553	0.031	0.656	0.005
Class of Degree	First			0.009	0.947	-0.097	0.467	0.038	0.757
	Upper-second class honours			0.091	0.436	0.061	0.604	0.055	0.623
	Lower-classes of degree	Reference Group							
Current Activity	Non-graduate job					-0.654	0		
	Graduate job	Reference Group							
	Unemployed					-.104	0.478		
	Further study					0.201	0.081		
	Other					0.683	0.008		
	UK nationality by non-grad job							-1.214	0
	EUR nationality by further study							2.053	0
	Constant	-0.801	0	-1.602	0	-1.328	.000	-3.695	0
	-2 Log likelihood	4137.948a		4005.628a		3948.814a		4596.172	
	Cox & Snell R Square	0.074		0.083		0.086		.043	
	Nagelkerke R Square	0.237		0.265		0.277		.138	

Source: Futuretrack composite file 1-4 (V2.2) w4 respondents only (European movers only, UK higher education institution only)

In all models, those who gained experiences abroad during their time in higher education were more likely to be mobile after gaining their degree, compared to those who only studied in the UK. Graduates were asked during their third year if they, as a part of their course, had spent time abroad either on a course or in an internship and, as can be seen in the logistic model, those with previous experience abroad were more likely to be mobile after graduation. One UK graduate now enrolled on a PhD course in Austria stated that when searching for his undergraduate course he was specifically looking for courses that offered overseas experiences. He consequently spent the third year of his 4-year degree in Australia; and it was there that he first considered doing his post-graduate course in a different country. As seen earlier, the high proportion of UK nationals reporting that English had not been their first language could also indicate a family history of previous migration.

Hypothesis 3, in which it was anticipated that EMGs with a higher class of degree were more likely to be mobile, needs to be rejected as this variable was not significant. Whilst most interviewees agreed that: ‘degrees from the UK are quite well renowned’ (UK 5) it seems that the class of degree is of less importance, especially for those who were in employment as the following quotes indicate: ‘The grade you receive is of limited value. (...) They were much more interested in my extra-curricular activities’ (UK 3); and ‘my employer did not care about my class of degree; they have no clue what a first means’ (EU 1).

The final set of hypotheses dealt with the labour market engagement and further study of EMGs after moving to another European country. The empirical data show that graduates working in a non-graduate job were less likely to be mobile compared to those working in a graduate job. Activities such as unemployment and further study were not significant in the distinction between mobile graduates and those remaining in the UK. Additionally, it cannot be assumed that UK graduates engaged in non-graduate jobs were more likely to be mobile, as anticipated in hypothesis 4b. The interactions between nationality and employment status analysed in the fourth model show that UK nationals holding non-graduate jobs were less likely to be mobile compared to all other graduates.

The empirical results accept hypothesis 4c; it could clearly be shown that graduates with other European nationality enrolled in further study were more likely to be mobile compared to all other graduates. One interviewee (EU4) stressed especially that she could build in her Ph.D. course on the analytical skills she developed during her time at a UK higher education institution. Another stressed (UK4), how he hopes that his Swedish Masters increases his employability and gives him an edge compared to non-mobile graduates: ‘I think that if someone has just been in the UK, and just studied in the UK, it doesn’t look like they are flexible, they haven’t had a diverse experience. And I have a more diverse experience than someone who has just studied and worked in the UK.’ At a later stage of the interview, he elaborated the mobility skills he gained by undertaking his postgraduate degree abroad. ‘You want to do it [be mobile] and you show that you want to do it, ... to show your adaptability and flexibility; in a wider aspect, movability.’

### **European mobile graduates made in the UK: part of a new European elite?**

Presented empirical results reinforce the picture previously drawn by researchers: UK-educated graduates coming from high or highest social classes and/or having studied at the best institutions are more likely to move to a different European country. In some institutions, lecturers transmit the Intra-European connections and help graduates to find employment or further study in other countries and thus multiply their own networks (Findlay *et al.*, 2006). In contrast to anticipated results, the class of degree was not significant for the selection of mobile graduates. Graduates working in graduate jobs were more likely to be mobile compared to those having stayed in the UK. For UK home graduates, working in a non-graduate job decreases the probability of mobility whilst for returners and other graduates enrolled in further study the mobility probability increases.

The study of languages and previously experienced mobility has increased the probability for mobility after graduation. Ackers and Gill (2008) point out that mobility is an increasingly complex endeavour and that it is vital not to see mobility decisions as a one-time event. Skilled graduates might spend only a limited amount of time in their country of destination; and they might decide to return to the UK or move on to a third country. It is worth noticing that mobile graduates' choice of subjects indicate that shorter time spent abroad during their study were actually some form of dress rehearsal for future mobility after graduation.

The presented research only shows a snap-shot of those who stayed in a different European country within the first few years after graduation. Furthermore, EMGs' pathways into the labour market or further study needs to be compared with that of those who remained in the UK in order to shed further light on the transferability of skills and degrees gained at a UK higher education institution.

The increasing number of mobile graduates from the UK in recent years, which includes both UK and non-UK citizens, indicates that mobility to a different European country is seen as one option to add further value to their degree and to increase chances of finding employment suitable for graduates. Moving to a foreign country is not necessarily a final decision and it can be expected that many graduates will return to the UK. As many EMGs were employed in graduate employment, it can also be expected that their time spent abroad will have helped them to gain work experience and international networks. Movement of highly skilled graduates to a different country to avoid employment in non-graduate jobs or even unemployment is thus a suitable coping strategy in order to maintain their employability for the UK, European-wide and indeed internationally. From a UK macro perspective, mobility was discussed in the context of a surplus of produced human capital and there were indications of a mismatch between the production and the need for human capital, especially for those choosing to remain in a different country. Even if graduates act as some kind of 'ambassadors' for the UK (HM Government 2013), it cannot be denied that their productivity will mainly be of advantage to non-UK employers at least in the short term. However, as many highly skilled graduates with non-UK financed education also enter the UK (Constant and D'Agosto, 2008) this could be seen as an exchange of skills and knowledge from which both the UK and other European countries can benefit. The growing mobility of UK-educated graduates indicates an experience-based increase of European values (Van Mol, 2013) and

one step towards greater acceptance of the chances a pan-European labour market has to offer to highly skilled people in the UK.

The current high level of populist anti-immigration feeling in the UK could conceivably lead to a referendum on leaving the EU. Were the UK to withdraw from the EU, would this affect highly skilled graduate mobility and in what ways? Given the topical nature of this controversial debate, this would seem to be an area for future targeted research on the intra-European mobility of highly skilled graduates.

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